

13th December 1969. 1st Round F.A. Amateur Cup v. Croydon Amateurs
(away)

Croydon A.O., Wycombe W. 1

GOALSCORING specialist, Keith Searle, justified Wycombe Wanderers' refusal to gamble their ticket into the second round draw of the F.A. Amateur Cup. But he left it too late for comfort, the 83rd minute, before breaking down Croydon Amateurs' dogged defence at the Sports Arena.

Until then, Saturday's first round tie had 'replay' stamped through it like a stick of seaside rock. What few local supporters turned out to cheer on the Amateurs, were already enquiring as to the quickest route to Wycombe for the return match.

Well, they won't be making that journey this season; but neither will Wanderers be travelling down the A.40 to Wembley for the competition's final, if they don't learn to wield more authority than they did over a combination like Croydon.

The Amateurs always played to utterly belie their precarious position deep in the Athenian League, division one relegation zone. Yet, there can be no denying that Wanderers looked less than Isthmian League pace-setters, even conceding the long reel of injuries and illnesses that had threatened to disrupt the balance of their side.

Admittedly, the eleventh hour loss of left-wing wizard, Geoff Anthony ruled out by a bout of tonsilitis was a blow. But it wasn't the knock-out punch.

Wanderers could have afforded the luxury of a fourth, even a fifth man to swell their forward power, which, even with Searle, Horseman and Busby, seemed a little thin.

Young Viv missed at least one unmissable chance to put Wanderers ahead earlier in the game, and failed throughout to inject vitality into his performance, before he was replaced by substitute Len Worley midway into the second period.

Thankfully, Len set about the Croydon defence in vintage-style and immediately had a spurring effect on the Wycombe team, which roused itself for a decisive 'push' on the Athenian's goal.

Now, with Keith and Tony at last finding some moral support, Les Geeraerts was forced to concede the winning goal. That Wanderers' victory was not assured by half-time, could be put down largely to some fine anticipation and safe handling from the Croydon 'keeper.

Six coach loads of Wycombe's followers took Cup fever to Croydon's lonely Sports Arena. Without their vocal lead, it might have been a dull afternoon indeed.

Wanderers responded to their boisterous support by launching straight into the attack, forcing a third-minute corner, and shooting twice, soon after, before the Amateurs could organise and rally.

At first in fact the scene seemed set for an unexpected, but welcome battle royal. Alas it took no time at all for the defensive outlook of both teams to drop the disguise and for the usual pattern to emerge.

Neither three-man attack could rise above the numerical disadvantage they met once in among the opposing defence.

Searle and Horseman, in need of one of Viv Busby's better performances, never enjoyed that particular luxury, and, with so much weight to carry, understandably fell below par.

But the Croydon front trio fared less successfully still. The quiet, efficient way in which Charlie Gale erased the right wing threat of Terry Baldwin counted largely towards Johnny Maskell's eventless game; meanwhile international duo, Delaney and Suddaby, battled through on less than their top form to hold firm in the van of Wycombe's defence.

Amateur's young hopefuls came under hectic pressure as Wanderers zoned in during the closing minutes of the first half.

The Isthmians showed most spirit with the substitution of Worley for Busby, 14 minutes after the resumption—a move which visibly unsettled Croydon, who introduced Fred Ruel for Mick Lloyd within the space of ten minutes.

As Wycombe gained momentum in front of Croydon's goal, so Geeraerts climaxed a grand display with some fine anticipation and handling.

Searle however broke the spell seven minutes from time when he ran through two defenders, and angled the ball into goal with the 'keeper beaten, sprawling on the ground.

Just how fine Wanderers had cut it was emphasized by Amateurs' closing efforts to equalise. Twice it seemed they would re-book their passage for a replay at Wycombe, but there was to be no such embarrassment for the Isthmians.

Croydon Amateurs: L. Geeraerts; D. Grout, A. Luckett; M. Lloyd (sub: F. Ruel); R. Agar, F. Childs; T. Baldwin, A. Young, B. Ruel, B. Russell, M. Price.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; J. Rundie, C. Gale; P. Suddaby, J. Delaney, K. Blunt; J. Lalley, B. Baker, K. Searle, V. Busby (sub: L. Worley), A. Horseman.

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A FIGHTING second-half rally by Wycombe earned them their first round F.A. Amateur Cup victory.

Keith Searle had been unlucky on several occasions, having shots cleared off the line by defenders Tony Luckett and Roger Agar, but in the 82nd minute he beat both men to a through ball and fired it past Les Geeraerts.